

Message Text

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ACTION DLOS-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AGRE-00 AID-05 CEA-01
CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00
EB-08 EPA-01 SOE-02 DOE-15 FMC-01 TRSE-00 H-01
INR-10 INT-05 IO-13 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00 NSF-01
OES-07 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-10 EUR-12
NEA-10 /172 W

-----020121 061745Z /14

O 061711Z APR 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8063
LOS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS:PLOS
SUBJECT: LOS - CONFERENCE DECISION ON THE PRESIDENCY

SUMMARY: THE CRISIS OVER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE LOS
CONFERENCE REACHED A DECISIVE STAGE IN THE EARLY MORNING
HOURS OF APRIL 6 WHEN THE PLENARY VOTED 74 TO 18 WITH 13
ABSTENTIONS TO ADOPT THE ASIAN GROUP'S PROPOSAL THAT
AMERASINGHE CONTINUES TO BE PRESIDENT. A U.S. PROPOSAL
TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM ON THE BASIS OF CONSENSUS WHICH
SOUGHT TO ACCOMMODATE PRINCIPAL CONCERNS OF ALL GROUPS
AND WHICH WAS WIDELY PRAISED BY ALL DELEGATIONS AS A
CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVE WAS REJECTED BY THE LATIN GROUP.
PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT AMERASINGHE WILL ASSUME THE
CHAIR AT PLENARY SCHEDULED FOR AFTERNOON OF APRIL 6 AND
WILL PROPOSE THAT THE CONFERENCE GET DOWN TO SUBSTANTIVE
WORK. END SUMMARY
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1. THE CRISIS OVER THE PRESIDENCY WHICH HAS DELAYED
ANY SUBSTANTIVE WORK SINCE THE CONFERENCE OPENED ON
MARCH 28 REACHED A DECISIVE STAGE IN THE EARLY MORNING
HOURS OF APRIL 6 WHEN THE PLENARY VOTED IN FAVOR OF AN
ASIAN PROPOSAL THAT AMERASINGHE CONTINUES TO BE PRESIDENT
OF THE CONFERENCE.

2. THROUGHOUT APRIL 5 THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S NEGOTIATING GROUP ATTEMPTED TO FIND A FORMULA WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CONFERENCE TO REACH A GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE OUTCOME ON THE BASIS OF CONSENSUS. THE U.S. OFFERED A PROPOSAL WHICH ATTEMPTED TO ACCOMMODATE THE VIEWPOINTS AND PRINCIPLES OF ALL REGIONAL GROUPS. U.S. PROPOSAL SUGGESTED THAT THE CONFERENCE DECIDE BY CONSENSUS AND WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO THE PRINCIPLES HELD BY VARIOUS DECLARATIONS THAT AN ACCOMMODATION OF THEIR VIEWS COULD BEST BE ACHIEVED THROUGH AN UNDERSTANDING THAT AMERASINGHE WOULD SERVE AS PRESIDENT FOR THE BALANCE OF THE 7TH SESSION. U.S. PROPOSAL ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE ASIAN GROUP PROPOSE A CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED AMERASINGHE WHO COULD BE ELECTED BY CONSENSUS BEFORE THE END OF THE 7TH SESSION AND WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO CONDUCT INTERSESSIONAL BUSINESS AND PRESIDE OVER SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS. ALL GROUPS WELCOMED THE U.S. PROPOSAL AS CONSTRUCTIVE AND IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ADOPTED AS A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS BUT FOR CONTINUING OPPOSITION BY THE LATIN GROUP WHICH IN THE END FOLLOWED ITS HARD LINERS AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT.

3. ALL ATTEMPTS AT REACHING A SOLUTION ON THE BASIS OF CONSENSUS HAVING BEEN EXHAUSTED WHEN THE LATIN GROUP REJECTED THE U.S. PROPOSAL AT THE END OF THE MEETING OF THE ACTING PRESIDENT'S NEGOTIATING GROUP EARLY EVENING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APRIL 5, THE CONFERENCE WAS LEFT WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO PUT THE QUESTION TO A VOTE AT A CLOSED LATE NIGHT PLENARY SESSION. BEFORE THE MAIN EVENT THE CONFERENCE REJECTED A MEXICAN PROCEDURAL MOTION ATTEMPTING TO GIVE PRIORITY TO ITS PROPOSAL THAT THE CONFERENCE SHOULD DECIDE THAT ANY DECISION SHOULD BE TAKEN BY CONSENSUS. AN ASIAN PROPOSAL THAT AMERASINGHE IS AND CONTINUES TO BE PRESIDENT RECEIVED PRIORITY AND WAS PUT TO A VOTE. IT CARRIED BY 75 VOTES TO 18 WITH 13 ABSTENTIONS. TWENTY-ONE DELEGATIONS ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE VOTE. IN ADDITION, 30 OF THE DELEGATIONS WERE ABSENT.

4. THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTES CAME MAINLY FROM THE ASIAN, AFRICAN AND ARAB GROUPS WHICH SUSTAINED THE REMARKABLE SOLIDARITY THEY HAVE SHOWN ON THE ISSUES SINCE THE CONFERENCE OPENED. OTHER COUNTRIES VOTING WITH THE MAJORITY WERE: THE U.S., AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, JAPAN, BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, YUGOSLAVIA, GREECE, AND TURKEY. THE LATIN AMERICAN GROUP DID NOT MAINTAIN ITS SOLIDARITY; A NUMBER OF ITS CARIBBEAN MEMBERS ABSTAINED AND COLOMBIA DID NOT PARTICIPATE. MOST OF THE SOCIALIST GROUP DID NOT PARTICIPATE. LIKEWISE MOST OF THE WEO GROUP ANNOUNCED THEIR NON-

PARTICIPATION. SPEAKERS OF BOTH GROUPS STRESSED THEIR
OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE TO VOTING AS A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT
FOR FUTURE WORK, ALTHOUGH INDICATING NO OBJECTION TO
AMERASINGHE CONTINUING AS PRESIDENT.

5. EXPLAINING THE AFFIRMATIVE VOTE OF THE UNITED STATES,
RICHARDSON SAID THE VOTE WAS ONE ON A PROCEDURAL QUESTION
NOT ONE OF SUBSTANCE WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE GENTLEMEN'S
AGREEMENT. THE U.S. REGRETTED THAT THE ISSUE OF THE
PRESIDENCY COULD NOT BE RESOLVED BY CONSENSUS. THE U.S.
HAD MADE EVERY EFFORT TO ACHIEVE CONSENSUS. IT WAS A
LESSER EVIL FOR THE CONFERENCE TO DECIDE THE MATTER NOW
BY VOTE, RATHER THAN CONTINUE TO BE PREVENTED FROM
CARRYING OUT ITS WORK. THE DELEGATES SHOULD RECOGNIZE
THAT THE VOTES DID NOT CONSTITUTE A PRECEDENT FOR RESOLU-
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TION OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES; THAT SHOULD BE DONE BY CON-

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ACTION DLOS-09

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INR-10 INT-05 IO-13 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00 NSF-01
OES-07 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-10 EUR-12
NEA-10 /172 W

-----020153 061744Z /14

O 061711Z APR 78
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8064
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SENSUS.

6. FOLLOWING THE TALLY A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES EXPLAINED THEIR VOTE. ALL, EVEN THOSE IN THE MAJORITY, DEPLORED THAT THE CONFERENCE HAD TO RESORT TO A VOTE AND HOPED VOTING COULD BE AVOIDED IN THE FUTURE. SEVERAL EMOTIONAL APPEALS FOR CONFERENCE HARMONY WERE MADE BY ASIAN AND AFRICAN DELEGATES. PERU, UNREPENTANT AND STILL FEISTY, ASSERTED THAT AMERASINGHE COULD NOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT OR INSENSITIVE TO THE SITUATION WHICH HAD DIVIDED AND PARALYZED THE CONFERENCE AND UNDERCUT HIS AUTHORITY, AND ALL BUT CALLED ON HIM TO RESIGN.

7. COMMENT: PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT AMERASINGHE WILL ASSUME THE CHAIR AT THE PLENARY SCHEDULED FOR THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 6 AND WILL PROPOSE THAT THE CONFERENCE GET DOWN TO SUBSTANTIVE WORK. IF HE CONTINUES IN OFFICE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS HE IS EXPECTED TO DO, A KEY QUESTION IS HOW MUCH COOPERATION HE CAN EXPECT FROM THE CONFERENCE, ESPECIALLY THE LATIN AMERICAN GROUP. MANY DELEGATIONS INCLUDING SOME WHICH HAD FIRMLY SUPPORTED HIM, HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT HE SHOULD RESIGN SINCE HIS AUTHORITY HAS BEEN BADLY ERODED BY THE LATIN CHALLENGE TO HIS LEGITIMACY; BY WHAT MANY CONSIDER TO BE HIS STUBBORN REFUSAL TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT HE HAS LOST THE CONFIDENCE OF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF DELEGATIONS; AND BY A FEELING AMONG NOT A FEW DELEGATES THAT HE WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HIS PERSONAL POSITION THAN THE WELFARE OF THE CONFERENCE. THE LATINS ARE NOT LIKELY TO MAKE HIS TASK EASIER AND WILL CERTAINLY TRY TO LIMIT THE SCOPE OF HIS AUTHORITY RELATIVE TO THAT OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN. THE SOCIALIST AND WEO GROUPS WILL PROBABLY WORK WITH HIM REASONABLY EFFECTIVELY, IF WITH SOMEWHAT DIMINISHED CONFIDENCE. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL HE CONTINUES TO HAVE THE STRONG BACKING OF THE ASIANS AND AFRICANS.

AN INDICATION OF WHETHER THE EVENTS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS HAVE LEFT SCARS MAY BE SEEN WHEN THE CONFERENCE DEBATES HOW THE WORK OF THE SEVENTH SESSION SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AND CARRIED OUT. REACHING AGREEMENT ON THAT ISSUE COULD BE TIME CONSUMING. RICHARDSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAW OF THE SEA, MEETING VOTING RECORDS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GENEVA05178
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780149-0275
Format: TEL
From: GENEVA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780487/aaaacvls.tel
Line Count: 215
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ff975cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION DLOS
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3057999
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LOS - CONFERENCE DECISION ON THE PRESIDENCY SUMMARY: THE CRISIS OVER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE LOS CONFERENCE REACHED A DECISIVE STAGE IN THE EARLY M
TAGS: PLOS
To: STATE LOS ANGELES
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ff975cb5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014